SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM

WASHINGTON, D. C.

September 20, 1917.

Mr. J. M. Johnston,

Upland, California.

Dear Mr. Johnston:

I am sending you herewith my description of Opuntia basilaris for your information. Treat it, however, as confidential. Opuntia brachyclada is a very strange plant, and I wonder whether it would be possible for you to obtain living specimens of it. You really ought to know yourself what it is, as it comes from your immediate neighborhood. I am enclosing a copy of the original description so that you can make out more definitely what the species is.

I am very anxious to learn all I can about the cactuses of southern California outside of the Opuntias. In case you can send us some living material, which we can use in making some of our colored illustrations, we will get you placed in our second volume. I am sending you one of the colored plates which will appear in my Opuntia Volume. This, too, I must ask you to treat as confidential.

J. N. Rose

Opuntia brachyclada sp. nov.

A low, caespitose species, seldom attaining a height of over 12 to 15 cm., in nature only about 10 cm., but often forming dense masses 50 or more cm. in diameter; joints exceedingly variable, slightly to decidedly flattened or at times almost perfectly terete, narrowly obovate to cylindrical, 2 1/2 by 10 cm. or often 26 by 130 mm. or even as low as 12 by 30 mm., sometimes one on top of the other and 2 or 3 joints high, but usually new joints appear a little below on outside of outer joints of the clump, glaucous, bluish-green, young joints reddish tinged; leaves small, conical, cuspidate, greenish red, about 2 mm. long; areoles subcircular, 3 mm. in diameter, and 10 to 16 mm. apart, spicules light-brown, changing to a dirty brown, at first surrounded by a narrow gray zone of wool, which is later obliterated, the tuft, therefore, occupying the entire areole except the very narrow wool zone, commonly 2 mm. in length, and numerous; spines absent; flowers purple; fruit small, subglobose, 1 to 1 1/2 cm. in diameter, yellow or with a blush of red on one side.

The spicules are as described above in the type specimen, but they may range in color from dirty-yellow to deep brownish-red as is true of the entire group. The type is preserved under my collection No. 10,768, and occurs commonly in the mountain valleys above San Bernardino, California.